

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 11415

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, CB, TH
SUBJ: THAI OFFICIALS COMMENT ON RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA

1. DEPUTY PRIMIN GENERAL BUNCHAI BAMRUNGPHONG TOLD THE PRESS MAY 24 THAT THAILAND HAS TRIED TO APPROACH CAMBODIA THROUGH A THIRD COUNTRY TO PERSUADE IT TO BEGIN TALKS WITH THE RTG ON CURRENT PROBLEMS. HE DID NOT IDENTIFY THE COUNTRY. REFERRING TO SALES PRIOR TO THE JAN 28 ATTACKS OF SALT AND FOODSTUFFS TO CAMBODIA, BUNCHAI SAID THAILAND IS IN A POSITION TO PROVIDE FUTURE ASSISTANCE IN THE FORM OF SUCH ITEMS AS SALT AND CLOTHING IF CAMBODIA AGREES TO OPEN TALKS. HE ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS SET UP DEFENSIVE MEASURES ALONG VARIOUS PARTS OF THE BORDER TO COPE WITH CAMBODIAN INTRUSIONS. UNLIKE SOME OTHER THAI OFFICIALS, BUNCHAI SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THE KC ATTACKS HAD BEEN APPROVED BY HIGHER AUTHORITIES.

2. ON THE PREVIOUS DAY, FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT PACHARIYANGKUN SAID THAT CAMBODIAN LIAISON PERSONNEL ARE CONTINUING TO REFUSE TO MEET WITH THEIR THAI COUNTERPARTS AT ARANYAPRATHET-POIPET, ALTHOUGH HE HOPED THAT CONTACT WOULD BE RESTORED SOON. WHILE THAILAND DOES NOT WANT TO ENTER INTO ARMED CONFLICT WITH THE CAMBODIANS, HE SAID THAT SO LONG AS PHNOM PENH REFUSES TO DISCUSS
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MATTERS WITH BANGKOK, THAILAND HAS NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO REMAIN ON ITS GUARD.

3. COMMENT: BUNCHAI'S OFFER OF AID FOR TALKS IS HARDLY LIKELY TO BE ONE WHICH THE CAMBODIANS WILL ACCEPT. INDEED, CONSISTENT WITH THEIR AT LEAST PUBLIC POLICY OF GOING IT ALONE, SUCH AN OFFER IS MORE

LIKELY TO ENGENDER A HOSTILE REACTION. FOR THE TIME BEING, AS
FAR AS WE CAN SEE, THAI-CAMBODIAN RELATIONS ARE AT A STANDSTILL.
ONE MFA OFFICIAL WARNED PRIVATELY, IN FACT, THAT WE CAN EXPECT TO
SEE STRONGER AND MORE DELIBERATE THAI MILITARY/POLICE RESPONSES TO
CAMBODIAN INTRUSIONS THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE IN THE PAST. HE
AGREED THAT BUNCHAI'S PLOY IS PROBABLY A NON-STARTER AND SAID THAT,
IF THERE IS TO BE AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO
COUNTRIES, IT WILL BE MANIFESTED IN A SUDDEN CAMBODIAN DESIRE
TO BEGIN TALKING AGAIN AT THE LIAISON OFFICE LEVEL, THE TIMING
OF WHICH CANNOT BE PREDICTED.
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

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